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Caradura: Migration, Informal Labor, and the Problem of Enacting Trust in a Spanish Enclave in Morocco

Some social scientists have argued that state legal institutions are not effective at protecting immigrants. Proper evaluation of ethnographic data, they argue, shows that migrants integrate themselves by forming strong, personal relationships of trust and friendship minimally grounded in discourses of ethnicity or kinship. They also transcend legal and cultural categories and assign roles other than those of the state. This article tests this model against the experience of migrants, refugees, and transfronterizos/as (cross-border laborers) engaged in informal ties of confianza (trust) in Ceuta, a small Spanish enclave in Morocco. Workers claim that while ties of confianza can transform into kinship, they are also ridden with suspicion and vulnerable to exploitation. Therefore, migrants claim they must show a caradura (literally, a hard face) and be ready to stand up to their employers to protect their interests. Ceutan employers, by contrast, use confianza to manage the risks of dealing with hostile foreigners, to regulate state interference, and to integrate the migrant on their terms. Building on anthropological theories of informal and domestic work, this article suggests that Ceutan confianza is better explained as an ambiguous, ethnically informed discourse both migrants and employers use to navigate Ceuta's unregulated shadow economy. [Mediterranean, friendship, law, risk, domestic work]

Many social scientists have recently proposed that the key to the socioeconomic security of immigrants does not lie with the state and its legal institutions. Outsiders, they argue, integrate by forming personal, informal relationships—with locals and each other—that often employ local idioms of trust and friendship. These ties, they add, have been ignored and misunderstood by sociologists and geographers of migration, who instead tend to give undue attention to bonds of kinship and ethnicity (Eve 2002; Ryan 2011). Friendship, they insist, was considered unable to shape migrant identities or influence the institutional structures of the host societies (Adams and Allan 1998; Bunnell et al. 2012). It was, moreover, associated with nepotism and clientelism, phenomena held undesirable in modern, Western, postcolonial society (Bell and Coleman 1999).

A thorough rereading of field data, however, indicated that friendship could indeed be treated as a separate kind of tie, for it claims values, ideals, and obligations that are only “minimally grounded” in ethnicity, kinship, gender, or any other categorical identity (Coakley 2002; Dyson 2010 Morosanu 2013; Santos-Granero 2007). Following Glick-Schiller (2008), some point out that this late awakening to the qualities of friendship points to a fatal flaw in social scientific epistemology and methodology, whereby ethnicity had slipped into becoming an unquestioned, taken-for-granted category determining groups’ and individuals’ identity, behavior, and alliances.¹ Sociological research had become all about finding differences across reified ethnic boundaries rather than about analyzing how those boundaries are constituted, transgressed, or mobilized in the first place (Brubaker 2002). Ethnicity the explanandum had turned into ethnicity the explanans

(Hempel and Oppenheim 1948). Shifting attention from the integration of communities to the construction of transnational networks and friendships offered a way out (Conradson and Latham 2005; Giordano 2010).

Recognizing friendship as a distinct type of relationship, these scholars insist, provides novel perspectives on overlooked crucial dynamics of postcolonial multicultural societies. If “friendship” is sociologically defined as (1) a voluntary relationship, (2) between two irreplaceable individuals, (3) evolves through time, and (4) has important emotional, political, and economic benefits for both partners (Pettigrew 1998; Terrel 2015; Voelker 2007), then it could be logically expected to lead to relationships and networks that override boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender, or nationality (Bridge 2002; Skelton 2009; Werking 1997). Critics here draw inspiration from scholars such as Granovetter (1973), who describe how, paradoxically, it is the “weak ties” of trust-based friendship formed with locals that give foreigners access to work, contacts, and the opportunity for prosperity. Communities sticking to the “strong ties” of kinship and ethnicity lock themselves in economically stagnant, inward-looking enclaves (Boyd 1989; De Luca 2003; Granovetter 1973; Irek 2011). Unsurprisingly, this literature ascribes this liberated friendship as having many virtues. It promotes an “inward reflexivity” that dissolves stereotypes as superficial and irrelevant (Amin 2006; Datta 2009), decreases multicultural anxieties (Schlueter 2012; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005; Valentine 2008), and supplies migrants with the sociocultural capital needed to access new resources and spaces (Li 2004). Migrant–host friendships have been even proposed as benchmarks of or for social integration (Esser 1986).

This article tests the sociological model of friendship against the experiences of migrants, refugees, and *transfronterizos/as* (cross-border laborers [male and female, respectively], a term primarily used by the Ceutan government) engaged in ties claiming *confianza* (trust) and *amistad* (friendship) in Ceuta, a small Spanish enclave in Morocco. Working primarily as undocumented domestic or construction workers, they complain that the language of trust masks ties that are both fragile and exploitative. To protect their interests, they feel they must learn to strategically balance complacency with subtle forms of resistance. Sometimes, they insist, they must even adopt a *caradura* (literally, a hard face), an uncomfortable stance denoting constant readiness to daringly stand up for themselves when they sense their employers acting in unfair and underhanded ways. Ceutan employers, by contrast, use the notion of *confianza* to manage the risks of dealing with potentially hostile foreigners, to regulate interference from the state, and, therefore, to integrate the migrant on their terms.

Building on anthropological literature on migration and informal labor, I suggest that ethnicity and kinship are not distinct from but are central to how ties of *confianza* are struck and subsequently managed. By extension, Ceutan *confianza* would be better explained as an ethnically informed discourse that is pragmatically used by both foreign labor and local employers to attempt to (de)legitimize and initiate or break informal ties; anticipate, articulate, and navigate hazards; and secure and hold political and economic advantages in Ceuta’s unregulated shadow economy. One effect of *confianza* is thus to shift the informal market from one that values alienable skills to one that hires persons based on their presumed moral integrity. This conclusion is based on the discursive and practical strategies that I observed migrants and employers use on a daily basis in Ceuta between 2010 and 2012, during which time I also taught one-on-one English classes and collaborated as a freelance journalist with some of Ceuta’s main newspapers. Accordingly, my data is supplemented by newspaper articles, also collected during fieldwork, as well as by formal interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with a stake in immigration.

The Pillars of Hercules

Overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar, Ceuta—along with Melilla and a few other islets along the Mediterranean coast of Morocco—belongs to Spain. In 1995, much to the anger of the Kingdom of Morocco, which claims the city as its own, Ceuta was granted autonomous status by the central government in Madrid. Aside from reaffirming it as an inextricable part of the Spanish nation-state, this move gave Ceuta extensive self-governing capabilities comparable to Spain's mainland communities, although matters pertaining to national interest, including cross-border trade and informal labor, are managed by a delegate who is sent by Madrid.

A 2011 census put Ceuta's population at eighty-two thousand. The figure is unhelpful because it says nothing about Ceuta's cosmopolitan demography. In effect, Ceutan bureaucrats estimate that only 56 percent of the enclave's population is "Christian" (a term locally referring to Spanish peninsular origin, not faith), and many of these are recently arrived *de fuera* (outsiders) from the mainland who were attracted by the wage bonuses, tax cuts, and job security offered by Ceuta's only real industry: the large civil service required to run its government. Hindus and Jews—wealthy traders and landowners—represent another 1 percent of the population. The remaining 43 percent is Muslim. Constituting Ceuta's precarious underclass of laborers, petty traders, or low-level bureaucrats, Muslims bitterly remark they lack the socioeconomic capital to compete for jobs in the civil service.

Trade with the hinterland has long been crucial to Ceuta's economy. The brutal Spanish colonization of northern Morocco (1912–1956) transformed Ceuta from a miserable prison-fort into Spain's busiest port, ferrying troops and resources across the Strait of Gibraltar (Driessen 1992; O'Reilly 1994). The protectorate ended in 1956, but my Ceutan informants often said that cross-border trade climaxed in the 1980s. They nostalgically recall long days and nights haggling over the endless stream of containers passing through Ceuta's Freeport. The fortification of Ceuta's border, along with vigorous competition from Morocco and Gibraltar, means that bulk trading is over, and while some successful bulk traders still operate from the enclave, most of the goods they shuffle across the world no longer pass through the city's ports. However, Ceuta's expanding civil service created a professional class wealthy enough to aspire to own a house and, often, a servant to maintain it. Ceuta's census is therefore also silent concerning the thrity to forty thousand Moroccans who crowd through the fortified Tarajal Gate every morning to work in the city. Most Moroccan men work informally in construction sites around Ceuta or in unskilled maintenance and shopkeeping jobs. Women, attracted by the prospect of independent income, are informally hired as domestic workers in Ceutan homes. Unmarried Moroccan women use this income to help build their houses, married women find this income offers some independent power, and single parents (widowed, divorced, or separated) need the income to survive. Their chores include cooking, cleaning, laundry, and food shopping, although these often quickly spread to unforeseeable tasks such as taking children to school, caring for the sick and elderly, and even walking the family dog. Informal laborers make approximately five to seven Euros per hour, and sometimes lunch (since, when cooking, the domestic worker is allowed to prepare something extra for herself). Moroccans find these rates acceptable, allowing them to beat competition from Ceuta's Spanish Muslims, who cannot live on such returns, since rents in Ceuta are notoriously high. In 2011, the rent for a two-bedroom apartment averaged nine hundred Euros monthly. Civil servant bonuses are designed to accommodate these prices. Muslims insist that these bonuses seek to attract Christian migration to counter Muslim's birth rates. Live-in arrangements between Spaniards and Moroccans are rare, partly because visitors from the Yebala region are forbidden to stay overnight in Ceuta, but mainly because many cross-border laborers

complement incomes by selling goods they are permitted to carry both ways across the border.

Despite their ubiquity, relations between Spaniards and cross-border laborers are generally cold. My Spanish informants offered many explanations. Moroccans, they say, are by nature selfish and deceitful, an increasingly fierce Islam commands hostility toward Christians, and decades of Spanish colonialism has produced hateful resentment. All agreed it best, however, to assume that the *moro/a*—a derogatory term for Moroccan Muslim males and females respectively—will damage Spanish interests if given the opportunity. Moroccans similarly complain that those greedy Spaniards, thinking themselves superior, have no qualms about firing them when they resist exploitation. Surprisingly, Moroccans will not work for Ceutan Muslims unless desperate for money or compelled by kinship obligations. They consider Ceutan Muslims to be, at best, baselessly snobbish and, at worst, traitors to the Moroccan cause. On a practical level, they fear that their Muslim employers would make them “slave away” after their large families for miserable pay. Ceutan Muslims return the animosity, and avoid relying on what they consider to be thieving, jealous foreigners.

Also active in Ceuta’s informal economy are those sub-Saharan, Syrian, and Indian refugees who survived the traumatic entry into the European Union and the subsequent attempts to deport them. Unlike the *moros/as*, who possess malignant agency, asylum seekers are viewed as humanitarian victims worthy of Ceutan charity, and sometimes they are offered informal work as shopkeepers or cleaners in churches. As an easily recognizable minority, however, employers hesitate to hire them; and when they do, they keep them out of sight.

The Idiom of Trust

In Ceuta, both employers and informal laborers routinely couch their relationships in the widely used language of *confianza*. Dictionaries generally translate this as “trust,” yet users of the term make a distinction between *confiar*, *confiado/a*, and *tener confianza*. *Confiar* refers to taking an action that involves risk, bringing it close to an understanding of trust assumed by neoclassical economic theory (see Rompf 2012, 119–129). *Confiado/a*, by extension, describes an overly trusting person who is either recklessly confident or innocently ignorant of danger. Inviting the *moro/a* into one’s home or private business is one particular source of peril that needs to be managed properly, lest disaster strikes. Blame would then solely lie with the Spaniard, a *confiado/a* who knew or ignored the risks of his or her actions.

Partners engaged in informal labor, nevertheless, claim that their relationships *tiene confianza* (literally, have trust). First, much like models of friendship reviewed above, this bond is based on the mutual recognition of valued personal characteristics and is forged by individuals who consider each other *de confianza* (trustworthy). Loli, the wife of a wealthy civil servant, for example, often told me that she has *confianza* with Fatima, her unmarried Moroccan maid, because she is “loyal,” “reliable,” and “very hardworking.” These flattering adjectives were but three (as well as humble, tireless, honest, and respectable) that emerged when employers discussed—with myself or other Ceutans—their relationship with those who work for them. Fatima, likewise, has *confianza* with Loli because her “good heart” understands her occasional need to leave work and attend to her ailing mother in Tétouan. Informal laborers, both men and women, emphasize these qualities as the markers of a “good family” or “good boss” worthy of one’s trust. Ties of *confianza* are not given but forged through the display of personal worth and esteem.

Second, even though informal workers refer to their employers as *el jefe* (the boss) or *la señora* (the mistress), and Ceutans speak of their employees as *la muchacha* (the girl) or

mano de obras (manual laborer), they use first names when undergoing their daily business and stress that their relationship, aside from being one of *confianza*, is also one of *amistad* (friendship), and that they are *amigos/as* (friends). The idioms of trust and friendship imply, of course, ties between individuals (not groups) who cannot be substituted. One can replace a laborer but not a friend, an argument that, as I explain, is good for blocking state interference. Additionally, these individual relationships ignore categories of nationality, religion, law, gender, and class. Ceutans often explained that they “don’t care what their [worker’s] name is,” as long as they exhibit trustworthy qualities. This is important because a name is an indicator of ethno-religious background, and, by some extension, nationality. The idiom of trust, therefore, allows the possibility of finding redeemable *moros/as*.

Third, people who “have *confianza*” report that they develop a sense of mutual economic and emotional *apoyo* (dependence). Morena, the wife of a senior high-school teacher, with tears in her eyes, described Sohra, her maid: “[She is] the cloth with which I dry my tears, because in order not to worry my family, I tell her all my problems. She is always ready to listen and offer advice.” Loli said, “Ever since I have been diagnosed with a chronic sickness, Fatima has been my hands and my feet. She is a real friend who has improved life drastically for me.” The sense of mutual dependency is generally associated with the right to pass on harsh, unsettling critiques in the interest of wanting the best for one’s friend. I was often told, *la confianza da asco* (disgusts). Bosses are consequently quick to point out problems with their employees. In return, *muchachas* might summon the confidence to admonish señoras on anything from spoiling children to bad home economics. As Loli notes, this can be a humbling experience:

It probably has to do with the economic condition in Morocco, but I have learnt a lot of tricks from her. She reproaches me if I buy from expensive places, and shows me how to save money, make good deals, and preserve food!

Informal laborers who become friends with their employers also receive benefits. Typically, this involves the *muchacha*—not Ceutan kin—getting the first pick of unneeded clothes and accessories. Sometimes, more urgent services are needed. One morning, Ghalia, the maid, called Pilar, her señora, desperately crying that her newborn child was not breathing properly. Pilar told her to come to Ceuta quickly, and then accompanied her to the hospital. The doctors, however, told them to go to Cádiz, on the Spanish mainland, for proper care. They were given official medical papers, but Ghalia was not allowed on the ferry.² Desperate, they rushed back to the office of the governmental delegate, to whom Pilar declared she was ready to legally vouch for her *muchacha* and her dying baby. This finally got them across to Cádiz. “I took responsibility for her,” Pilar often told me, “as if she were my daughter.” This echoes anthropological reports that describe how evidence of suffering (particularly terminal illness and sexual violence) is becoming a passport into an increasingly fortified Europe (Ticktin 2011).

“Una mas”

“Pedro was the son of the señora,” Mariam, a Moroccan, reminisced one evening after Spanish class:

He hated Moroccans for how they turned his neighborhood into a ghetto when they migrated. But we started talking and became friends. We had a lot of *confianza*, and he supported me by telling me things I didn’t know about the medical system, social security, how much I should be earning.

Much to the distaste of their relatives, Mariam and Pedro fell in love and married. When, after a few years, Mariam wanted to work again, he helped her obtain a job with a “good family” and “a contract with a proper wage and welfare benefits!”

Confianza, many insist, constitutes the basis for more intimate relationships based on *amor* (love) and *cariño* (affection), which lead to marriage. The conversion of friendship into affinity, despite protest from kin, is not uncommon. However, those who remain friends also use the language of kinship to stress the intimacy of their relationships with transfronterizos/as. Ceutan employers similarly claim their workers are like “sisters” or, as with Ghalia, like “daughters” to them. Muchachas often become “second mothers” or “aunts” to the señoras’ children. Most often, they are elevated to the status of *una mas* (literally, one more), another member of the family; that is, “one of us.” One evening, after I gave Raquel’s sons their English lessons, she commented:

The muchacha started working with us ten years ago. She has seen my sons grow up, just as I have; she has picked them up from school, fed them, cleaned their clothes, washed them, took them to the doctor, and gave them medicine. She has reproached them when they misbehaved. We did not see it happening, [but] she is now *una mas*, a second mother to my children.

Mina, from Tangiers, claims that one of the greatest days of her life was when she was invited to the confirmation of the son of her señora, Rocío. The latter, in a separate interview, added:

When my eldest turned eighteen, I sent him to Granada to study. The day before he left, I heard someone crying. It was Mina. She told me that it was sad that she was ironing the clothes my son was to take with him to Granada. She felt as if one of her sons was leaving. . . . My son always calls when he knows she is around. When I ask if he’s eating well, [he] says he misses Mina’s lentils. I wonder who his mother is!

To sum up, ties of *confianza* seem efficient at overcoming the dangers Ceutans perceive from ethnic outsiders. The “weak ties” of *confianza* can furthermore become “strong bonds” of kinship, assigning roles complementing (*una mas*, aunt, second mother) or even displacing (mother) Ceutan statuses. These symbolic roles offer affection, respect, and power. Muchachas come to exert control over household finances and authority over the children of señoras. They become the locus of commensality, and find they can place moral obligations on their mistresses, particularly in emergencies.

Giving a Finger, Taking the Hand

Accounts glorifying *confianza*, however, constitute but the tip of the iceberg of narratives offered by both informal laborers and their employers. Moroccan cross-border laborers would find their experiences better apprehended by anthropologists concerned with how trust-based friendships, interwoven with their political context, can be hazardous affairs (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Gambetta 1988; Paine 1999). They would also align themselves with feminist anthropologists concerned with the challenges and contradictions that emerge with valuing domestic work and hiring domestic workers. For example, while these workers have to be paid, neoliberal ways of structuring work in terms of clearly defined and finite tasks cannot be realistically applied to tasks involving caring for a home (such as doing the cleaning, buying materials, keeping order) and facilitating the reproduction of family relationships (for example, cooking, tending to the young, and caring for the sick and

elderly) (Colen and Sanjek 1990; Dickey and Adams 2000; Shah 2002). In other words, while employers are nominally hiring a worker's time, what they are really buying is the power to place demand on a worker's caring sensibilities and, thus, on their moral integrity as persons (Anderson 2000).

This contradiction produces work environments liable to turn very nasty, quickly. In Ceuta, I never encountered cases in which domestic work slid into sexual violation reminiscent of slavery (Hansen 1990; Healy 1994). However, as with other cases worldwide, Ceutan employers seek muchachas that are "motherly," "loyal," "affectionate," and "clean," and who would never abandon a crying, hungry, or sick child or leave a room half cleaned when the stipulated workday is over. When demands are placed on the worker's personal integrity, responsibilities easily multiply, days lengthen, and contracts (if granted) become irrelevant caricatures of what the job really entails (Lesley 1994; Romero 1992; Silverman 2005).

In feminist literature, employers tend to respond to these obvious contradictions in two ways. First, they extend the language of kinship into hired labor. Clearly, the worker should now no longer be motivated solely by financial remuneration but must prioritize her new family over her own (Anderson 2013; Aklam 2007; Yakuta 1993). As I show, this can develop into a lose-lose situation, in which, first, rejecting kinship might see a muchacha fired, while embracing it might generate fears that the outsider *really* is becoming a member of the family. Second, señoras hire "ethnic others" because it allows them to improve their position not by scoring political victories against patriarchy but also by dumping junk tasks on persons who are "first ethnic others, then women" (Anderson 2000; hooks 1982). Indeed, Ceutan matrons often commented that their muchachas' "traditional Moroccan" upbringing magically attunes to the home, making them excellent housekeepers (when they want to be). They never consider whether this Moroccan expertise might be the result, rather than cause, of transfronterizas' decisions to work in Ceuta.

These strategies emerge clearly in transfronterizas' narratives. For example, Mina joined Rocío's household after the previous muchacha was dismissed because she was terrified of the dog Rocío had bought for her children, and the muchacha refused to walk it. Mina would spend the next five years displaying her worth by working every day, "even when she's sick." After six years, she was entrusted with some house finances; by the eighth year, she became una mas who ran the household as a second mother, was invited to family rituals, and eventually was "granted a contract."

Mina's story is a relatively smooth one. Most laborers quickly conclude that meekness only results in *trabajando para nada* (working for nothing, and thus confining oneself in permanent and senseless exploitation). Accordingly, linguistic skills need to be reinforced, lessons on how employers think must be distilled from daily experience, social networks have to be expanded, a caradura should be shown, and relationships broken if need be. For example, Mariam, introduced earlier, was happily married and legitimized. Her story, however, began eight years earlier, when her cousin—a domestic worker—encouraged her to leave her job in a textile factory for a placement she found with a Christian family in Ceuta. The pay was good, but after a couple of months, she was asked to work weekends and to sleep over on weekdays. She tried to negotiate, because she had an elderly mother to take care of at home. Her Spanish was poor, so her attempts to request a compromise were seen as impudent protest, and she was fired. Some months later, a friend recommended her to an old, childless Ceutan man. Desperate for money, she took the job. Mariam grew to like him, but as the years rolled by and his health waned, she realized she had basically become a nurse, and she was fearful that if an emergency were to happen, she would be unable to call for help. Worse, she attracted the hatred of the man's sister, who thought that

Mariam, as una mas, stood a chance of receiving a share of his inheritance. One day, while Mariam was cleaning the man's bedroom, the sister burst in and accused her of theft. Sure enough, some of the money Mariam knew the man kept in his room—some thirty thousand Euros—had disappeared. Unable to argue her case effectively (*defenderse*) in Spanish, she was branded a shameless, lying mora and dismissed. She spent a year in Morocco, and then enrolled at a Ceutan institution offering Spanish courses for immigrants. As her Spanish improved, she sought the assistance of NGOs that provide information on laborers' rights. This, indeed correlates with the rise of Spanish NGOs in charge of managing relations between the state and the migrant, reported by scholars of migration, who also insist that while NGOs see themselves as the representatives of Spain's liberal, civil society, they are not free of Islamophobic biases and often end up becoming apparatuses of the state's repressive powers (Dietz 2000).

Eventually, Mariam felt ready for another job. Her caradura got her a good salary, but her new Christian family would not give her a contract. Unable to budge them, she left. Her NGO friends introduced her to another Christian family, which is how she met her future husband.

Much like Mariam, all of my transfronteriza informants feel they are walking on thin ice. Suspicion is constant. Passionate, scathing accusations of theft and betrayal strike without warning. They are also dismissed if only suspected of deceit: Is she secretly buying things for herself when shopping for food? Is she inviting friends, or taking showers, when nobody is at home? Ceutan employers acknowledge their maids' superior knowledge of housework, and accordingly are never quite sure whether their maids are working too slowly or too rapidly. Such suspicions can simmer for weeks on end, until employers, unable to bear the *uncertainty* of not knowing whether their transfronteriza is guilty, fire her.

Furthermore, where the language of friendship is infused with that of charity, a caradura can backfire. In Morocco, I was often told that people "have nothing." The salaries they obtain in Spain are "all they have." Anderson (2006) argues that this rhetoric of "charity" is common in the world of informal migrant labor, and helps employers handle the disturbing feeling of having total power over an individual. In Ceuta, however, this discourse places employers in a morally impregnable position. Labor using caradura to negotiate demands or privileges only serves to depict the employee as greedy and shameless, a parasite that the softhearted, betrayed *confiado/a* employer can—and should—expel. Charity, like trust, is a way of maintaining, not lessening, control over an uncertain situation.

Migrants fear that following dishonorable dismissals, they will be unable to find "a good family/boss" and will end up in the worst position: on *la calle* (the street). In Ceuta, another way to manage the risk posed by the hostile foreigner is to hire labor recommended by those with whom one shares *confianza*. These are generally neighbors or family members who are looking to place workers they no longer require. It is also normal for trustworthy employees, upon request, to recommend workers for their employers' friends, or to replace those who decide to stop working. If trust collapses, however, so does the chain of referral, and foreign workers with poor connections might find themselves "knocking on doors" in search of work. Ties made this way, they insist, never work, since the process of referral, which provides some security on which trust could flourish, is absent. Talk of charity predominates instead. Transfronterizas consider *la calle* to be but one step above prostitution, and some in this situation claimed that they had been approached by pimps who would "get them started." Prostitution represents the ultimate failure of transfronteriza work: shameful, dangerous, and unreliable, and with no room for advancement. It even destroys one's identity, as fake names must be adopted.

Enacting Trust

Interestingly, even those foreigners who report having strong bonds with their employers report a constant unease. Many, thus, pursue the acquisition of a legal contract, as they believe it offers protection in a context operating on the strategic inaccuracies of *confianza*. Their efforts toward legitimization expose further problems regarding the integrative powers of trust and friendship.

Wages, border crossings, and the meaning of law

After years of service, satisfied employers might consider granting a contract. Legitimizing informal laborers, however, is a nightmare. It starts with a visit by the employer and (prospective) employee to the Foreign Office to seek a *Número de Identificación de Extranjero* (NIE), a card that allows non-Spanish nationals to access to medical services, sign work contracts, or pay taxes. Next, the laborer must present a passport, medical and criminal records, and proof of residency from Moroccan authorities (who require bribes). A notary then drafts the contract. Finally, a pension scheme is set up. The process costs around one thousand Euros and takes several months.

Employers undergoing this process generally find they were grossly underpaying their laborers. Paco, who often boasted how well he treated his *muchacha*, was shocked to find he needed to pay an additional fifty Euros per month to meet the minimum wage and another 171 Euros for the pension scheme. Juan, likewise, realized he was both underpaying *and* overworking his *muchacha*. Law states that part-time employees should work twenty hours per week; his *muchacha* was working twenty-nine hours per week. Paco absorbed the cost. Juan fired the worker, afraid that the government was now aware of and investigating his illegal employment of his Moroccan maid.

Legitimation nets other benefits that can place both partners at ease. Accidents at work, surprisingly common given that Ceutans are not always aware of their safety obligations, can be treated at Spanish hospitals without the danger of police inquiries. Pilar legitimized Ghalia following their misadventure crossing to the mainland. Sohra, introduced earlier, gave birth three times in Ceutan hospitals. Two of those had been complicated deliveries, but Morena solemnly explained to me that Sohra's contract entitled her to Spain's superior medical service. Social security also gives laborers a card they can use to enter Ceuta through a special gate, saving them the slow-moving queues, bottlenecks, form-writing, shoving, and pickpocketing that is the normal state of affairs at the border.

Successful legitimization, therefore, comes when the employer is convinced that the benefits of including the state outweigh the risk of surrendering total control over the worker. Unlike in the literature discussed above (Lesley 1994; Romero 1992; Silverman 2005), in Ceuta contracts are not made to establish the terms of employment or settle conflict (something they cannot do anyway) but to confirm ties of realized *confianza* in a certificate imbued with the authority of the state. Contracts enact trust and point to the intention of permanence and commitment in a context marked by economic and semiotic instability. It should not be a surprise that foreign workers maintain the papers marking their employment status in pristine condition, and keep them on hand at all times. They are more than legal documents: they are markers of being self-made in Ceuta.

Transcending locality

At the age of twenty-one, Ravi left his home village in India's Uttar Pradesh region to follow his father's footsteps to earn good money in Europe. A "travel agency" took his

18,500 Euros and his passport, and got him to Morocco, where he was smuggled into Ceuta via a hidden compartment in a van, and he was told to look for the “men in green,” meaning the Guardia Civil, Spain’s semimilitary border force. He did so, and was taken to Ceuta’s overcrowded migrant accommodation center to await his fate. Months rolled by, and concerned that he would be permanently forgotten, Ravi joined the other Indian migrants camping in Ceuta’s foothills. Ravi did not last very long: he became sick and had to seek medical care. At the hospital, he made friends with two NGO workers, who taught him Spanish, explained his rights, and eventually invited him to live with them. When he recovered, he started visiting the Hindu temple, where he was offered a job (“Not illegally! It was a ‘humanitarian gesture’ toward our suffering brother!” the spokesperson of the Hindu community insisted). It paid little, but it kept him busy.

A year after his arrival, Ravi was taken to mainland Spain, where authorities had sixty days to decide whether to deport him. At the fifty-seventh day, he was granted permission to stay. Ravi was free, but in mainland Spain he also friendless. “From the streets,” he found a job as a waiter in Marbella. For two years, Ravi worked fifteen hours a day, earned nine hundred Euros a month, and slept at the restaurant. His Spanish boss started to demand more hours, and then withheld pay, claiming he wanted to open another restaurant. Ravi’s caradura secured a fraction of his wage so he could visit his family in India, but when he came back to Spain, he found no wages forthcoming, so he decided to leave the restaurant. He found some odd jobs, but eventually, exhausted, returned to Ceuta, where his NGO friends secured a contract for him in a local business.

Aarav, also from Uttar Pradesh, paid thirteen thousand Euros to cross the Sahara and another three thousand Euros to be smuggled into Ceuta. Like Ravi, he joined the hill camps. He struck up a friendship with a sympathetic Hindu businessman who often visited with food. This businessman gave him a job in a bazaar, where Aarav was quickly recognized as a trustworthy, reliable worker. Eventually he too was called to mainland Spain and given his freedom, but he had no luck finding work, and refused to take jobs “off the street.” He contacted his old boss, who sent him a letter of recommendation (which he still keeps) and directed him to a partner in Madrid. The businessman immediately employed Aarav in a small restaurant he owned. The story ends well: proving himself a diligent worker, his employer shouldered the twelve-hundred-Euro fee to have him employed legally and permanently.

Ethnic stereotypes, thus, play an important role in creating friendships. It seems, however, that trust that is based on ties confer no privileges beyond the social relations in which they were given. This greatly worried my migrant informants. Ravi and Aarav were helpless outside of Ceuta. Transfronteriza maids found that the rights they earned in one household could not be transferred to another. By factoring in the long years of hardship and luck required to become an *uno/a mas*, and adding in the real danger of having to start all over if things go wrong, one starts to grasp why immigrants want contracts and references, despite their inability to avoid or resolve conflicts with their bosses. Transfronterizos/as used contracts as letters of recommendation and enactments of trust when they needed to find new positions, as these papers pointed to the worth someone saw in them after many years of work. Contracts turned them from hostile strangers into potentially hardworking individuals. Only *confiados/as*, they say, worked for employers who refused to acknowledge this.

Ahmed’s tragic saga

One morning, Ahmed crossed the border to find his little shop in Ceuta barred by the police. The government had shut it down, he was told, because he lacked the proper permits. When

journalists, who had been invited by Ahmed's friends, arrived on the scene, they found him "staring in disbelief," his "sobs punctuated by furious appeals to God for explanation." The newspaper article that followed went to great lengths to show the cold injustice of Ceuta's government. For four decades Ahmed, now sixty-nine years old, would wake at 4 a.m. to join the long queues at the border, walk to the Ceutan marketplace, and sell groceries from a stall owned by a Spanish businessman with whom he grew to have *confianza*. When the businessman retired, he entrusted Ahmed with the shop in exchange for a weekly rent of twenty-five Euros. Ahmed "is intimidated by laws and regulations," but he never failed to pay his dues to his boss, and then to his daughter when he passed away. On a good week, he might earn fifty Euros, so it is a mystery how he fed his family of fourteen, none of whom could find work. The story ends with Ahmed's furious marketplace colleagues mounting a petition that failed to make the government revoke its decision. The governmental delegate, they concluded, "bullies the weak but cowers before the rich" (*El Faro de Ceuta* 2012b).

Verinis (2007), in discussing the integration of migrants into Greek rural society, observes how "fieldwork . . . can investigate local narratives [and] linguistic strategies . . . to expose the processes in becoming group members." Indeed, my ethnographic data inclines me to agree that narratives are never neutral, obvious, or fixed, but instead are strategically assembled by both employers and informal laborers in moments in which *confianza* is challenged and intruded upon. I would add that it is not a surprise that *confianza* chooses to articulate itself in story form. Narratives weave unique tales that transform "contemporaries" into "consociates" (Carrithers 2008), which is what Ceutan notions of trust are all about. Thus, in 2012, the Ceutan government launched a campaign to stamp out illegal businesses and cafés it suspected of being hubs of drug trade. Shop owners responded in the news with tragic stories of how the government had destroyed the livelihoods of the trustworthy, honest workers they had worked with for years. Such stories turned the protagonists into victims, whose great friendship—which embedded the foreigner in local communities—was wrecked by the villainous, distant state blindly enforcing its categories.

While these tactics produced stories of solidarity and of tyrannical governments, Ahmed remained jobless and his family unfed. This again indicates why informal laborers pursue documentation: it is sufficient protection from the state when it comes blindly knocking.

Falling Great Distances

For employers, the state blinds itself whenever it can, because engaging with *confianza* means engaging in complicated dramas that spill beyond legal categories. In 2012, a delegate confessed that efforts to legitimize informal labor had failed (*El Faro de Ceuta* 2012a). Ceutan employers said they would rather sack their workers than pay tax, leading to concerns that attempts to control the shadow economy might destroy it. Equally unappealing was that the campaign required prospective employers first to hire an unemployed Ceutan, and then only nominate a replacement if the Ceutan proved inadequate after a three-month probationary period. The delegate also admitted that translating the bonds of *confianza* into that between labor and capital was difficult. The state's lawyers could not decide whether foreign workers were "employees," *trabajadores del hogar* (houseworkers), or even *maestros* (professionals), and if they received "salaries," "donations," or "contributions" for their "labor" or "service." As a delegate conceded, "The context in which this work is conducted is rooted in personal intimacy and *confianza*, and alien to common regulations of work relations" (*El Faro de Ceuta* 2012c).

The government's inability to conceptualize *confianza* has led to disturbing spectacles of indecision and incompetence. In 2008 Ali Duas, a Moroccan, was hired to do maintenance on a Spanish ship, but he fell off the vessel's mast, plunging more than forty-nine feet to

his death. Duas's family hired a lawyer and sued the Spanish employers. Two years later, another transfronterizo, Mohamed, was painting the outside of a house. Hanging from the side of the building, Mohamed lost his balance and fell to the street below. Panicked, his Ceutan Muslim employer put Mohamed in his car, left him on the steps of the hospital, and drove off. Mohamed died an hour later. His employer was apprehended by the police and charged with manslaughter and the illegal employment of foreigners.

Duas's and Mohamed's lawyers claimed the deceased were poor *chapuzas* (unskilled, cheap manual workers, often stereotyped as producing shoddy work) who crossed the border to earn their daily wages doing odd jobs. They accused the employers of not providing the safety measures required by law. The defendants pleaded not guilty, claiming that the Moroccans were *maestros* who, though informally hired, were responsible for their own safety. The trials dragged on from 2006 to 2012, at which time the exhausted jury was finally won over by the defendants' argument: Duas had died of "extreme recklessness" at the place of work. "The relationship between worker and the person who required his services," the jury stated, "was not one of a contractual nature" (*El Faro de Ceuta* 2012e). Mohamed's jury quickly followed suit, adding that as a *sinpapeles* (undocumented) worker, his employment was based on *confianza*, a relationship not covered by labor law. The jury found that Mohamed was a "friend" who acted freely under his own volition. The Ceutan employer was also absolved of manslaughter, with the court admonishing him for moving the wounded man but also commending him for trying to save the Moroccan's life (*El Faro de Ceuta* 2012f).

Again, *confianza* exhausts and outmaneuvers attempts at governance. Moreover, given the absence of a legal framework, Ceutan courts reacted to an essentially morally ambiguous situation by whitewashing the Spaniards and piling so much blame on the outsiders that their families even had to pay the costs of the trials. The Duas case not only became a legal precedent that was used to speedily settle other trials but also lessened the urgency for a code that might actually impart justice.

Conclusion

The trajectories of cross-border workers allow us to go beyond the theoretical position recently developed by social scientists, who optimistically see the formation of friendship and trust across ethnic boundaries as the cure to many postcolonial ills. This ethnographic data also enables us to push beyond the Marxist-feminist literature, which gloomily holds that these discourses of intimacy boil down to hidden forms of exploitation that allow Western matrons to improve their positions in the household by oppressing other women.

First, in contrast to what the Marxist-feminist literature implies, the exploitative use of discourses of "trust" and "friendship" is not specific to the "private-female" sphere of the home (Anderson 2000, 1–8). On the contrary, and in parallel to what ethnographers of rural informal work in the United States have documented (Van Onselen 1997), *confianza*'s potential to resist state interference operates just as effectively in public-male spaces, such as marketplaces and construction sites. These are spaces that involve tasks whose nature, unlike that of domestic work, lend themselves better to the application of "neoliberal" and legal categories.

Second, the social-scientific work reviewed in this article celebrates friendship as formed between individuals. Nonetheless, *confianza* almost certainly fails if not invested with what Rabinowitz calls a "minimal sense of trust" (1997, 119–145), which comes from various types of recommendations. This indicates that trust can be transferred between individuals and invested in authoritative documents and shared narratives. While the literature on friendship seeks to distance itself from "methodological ethnicity" (Glick-Schiller 2008),

it must be careful not to slip into the “methodological individualism” that economic anthropologists and students of risk consistently criticize (Douglas 1994; Hart, Laville, and Cattani 2010).

Third, idioms of friendship cannot be epistemologically detached from other categorical identities (for example, emic notions of ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, class, or caste). In this, I follow many social anthropologists, particularly those working in Europe and the Mediterranean, whose long ethnographic engagement with “friendship” indicates it is complexly intertwined with—and definitely not blind to—notions of ethnicity, generating morally ambiguous ties of exchange and alliance that can be manipulated to either transgress *or* reinforce sociocultural boundaries and structures of power. Thus, classical ethnographers of southern Europe are deeply intrigued by the link between friendship, patronage, and ethnicity.³ Contemporary authors similarly observe how, despite attempts by European nation-states to control the movement of migrants’ bodies both within and without their borders (AlBahari 2015; Andersson 2015; Cabot 2012), migrants have been resourceful enough to operate local institutions and capitalize on local understandings of ethnicity-friendship in order to secure some degree of socioeconomic success and integration.

Yukseker (2004) and Celik (2007), for example, each describe how female Russian migrants, stereotyped as sexually adventurous and economically enterprising by Turkish men, form delicate yet profitable trust-based partnerships with local businessmen that might lead to marriage and citizenship. Anthropologists regularly report how in the Republic of Malta, Italy, and France local entrepreneurs informally recruit sub-Saharanans, whom they consider to be “honest and hardworking,” over their “lazy” compatriots, whom they expect would swindle and cheat them. While these relations are often short-lived, they sometimes flourish into strong ties that supply migrants with badly needed economic security, legal and medical protections, and positions of some responsibility and authority (Baldwin-Edwards 2002; Cassar 2010; Reyneri 2007). In Spain, ethnographers and pro-migrant activists routinely reiterate that the first North African migrants to arrive in the 1990s quickly formed friendships with local farmers, with whom they shared respect for manual work and the difficult experience of moving to foreign countries (Suarez-Navas 2004). Following pressure from the EU, however, the Spanish state sought to project the immigrant as a sociocultural threat, making the categorical suspicion of the potentially dangerous ethnic outsider a factor to consider when negotiating bonds of interpersonal respect (Arango 2000; Martínez Veiga 2010; Solé and Parella 2003, 122).

In Ceuta, too, ideas about ethnicity and kinship constitute stable ground on which both workers and employers evaluate, navigate, and legitimize the risks of participating in the enclave’s shadow economy. The rhetoric of kinship is used by Ceutan actors to vie for moral position; to stabilize volatile relations; to insert some predictability in a context laden with uncertainty; and, therefore, to maintain a state of inclusive exploitation while blocking the state, which is thought of as unable to speak to the fears and desires of the parties involved. Local ethnic stereotypes are just as crucial. On the one hand, sub-Saharan or Indian refugees, though unwanted, are seen as the traumatized and courageous victims of illegal migration, and are riskily employed as subjects of Ceutan humanitarian charity. On the other hand, moros/as are assigned a creatively malevolent agency that must be factored into the daily routines of anyone who is not a *confiado/a*. Moroccan agency also implies that they *voluntarily* form ties of *confianza*. In tight places, such as the criminal cases described above, this allows tactics of “responsibilisation,” whereby “forms of inequality and blame are imposed on self-care rather than on structural problems that require cultural and political solutions” (Rogozen-Soltar 2012, 642). Discourses assigning victimhood to sub-Saharan and Asian refugees, but hostile agency

to Moroccans have been recorded elsewhere in Spain (Rogozen-Soltar 2007; Shryock 2010).

Fourth, the sociological literature on friendship largely omits the state. The Marxist-feminist literature takes on domestic labor but projects the state as the manufacturer of illegal, docile workers who can easily be exploited by citizens. While Ceuta's awkward documentation procedure *could* be read in such ways, the impression one gets from interviews with bureaucrats and politicians is of frustration and confusion at their inability to control (and tax) the shape-shifting, Jenga-like structure of the Ceutan economy. This failure stems from the fact that *confianza* is more than just a way to moralize risk in lieu of effective governmental control. Rather, it appears that in this unregulated *laissez-faire* market, actors have used the language of *confianza*—and its associated claims on the value of intimate ties between irreplaceable individuals—to command persons and their moral integrity instead of their alienable skills, time, and labor. To excel in Ceuta's shadow economy, one must not only be a good builder or cleaner but also a fundamentally good, reliable, and trustworthy person (and the odds are already against the *moro/a*). This, too, has helped employers in the *confianza*-driven economy to control their potentially dangerous employees while preventing the Ceutan government from applying its legal powers at will.

In effect, one of the achievements of *confianza* has been to dissuade foreign workers from forming organizations with which to protest the Ceutan government, a route of action championed by many feminist students of hired domestic labor (Anderson 2013; Ruhs 2013). They do not mobilize because they are constantly confronted with the inefficacy of the Ceutan government as a potential ally. Transfronterizos/as are also aware that forcing employers into contracts that clearly specify work obligations and limit Ceutans' power to dismiss their workers might truly destroy the industry, and with it their only real source of income. They find that subtle forms of resistance reminiscent of Scott's (1987) "Weapons of the Weak"—parodying bosses, working quickly or slowly, conducting one's business in work hours, securing alternative engagements in case things go wrong, using fictive kinship and *confianza* to place moral obligations, and trying to figure out what their unpredictable employers think (they think)—are infinitely more effective. Transfronterizos/as think that they have a better chance playing a rigged game than trying to change its rules.

Anthropologists working on migration in the Mediterranean have often noted how, in contexts in which the nation-state is unwilling or unable to distribute legal rights, outsiders use ethnicity—friendships to participate in local institutions that ascribe outsiders respect and protection. For example, Kottmann (2011) notes how North African migrants participate in village reenactments of the medieval battles that expelled Muslims from Spain. While far-right parties see these events as reminders that "Spanishness" is incompatible with Islam, Kottmann (2011) and Garrido Atienza (1998) argue that such rituals consolidate these migrants as real members of Spain's rural communities. In Malta, sub-Saharaners are becoming increasingly active in the islands' religious feasts, at which their hard work and enthusiasm sometimes elevates them into influential positions in the clubs that manage these traditions so central to Maltese village identity (Cassar 2010). Similar phenomena have been reported in Greece and Italy, where arrivals are incorporated in systems of fictive kinship and patronage (Albahari 2009; Ebough and Curry 2000; Verinis 2007).

Ceuta takes this one step further by simply indicating that one could do other things to state law, other than exclude it and rely on alternative systems to assign rights and privileges. The *confianza*-based economy's principle feature is, in fact, its ability to *regulate* governmental participation as needed. On a simple temporal level, this happens when employers feel safe surrendering some control over the migrant person. More remarkably, however, Ceuta's shadow economy is able to reinterpret and rechannel the power of the state to reinforce

the economy that peddles persons rather than skills. In Ceuta, confianza finds its ultimate expression when it is enacted, manifested, and materialized in documents whose primary local functions are not to regulate a relationship or to resolve a conflict but instead to act as a passport or proof that the person who holds them is reliable, and whose worth has been exhibited through many years of locally meaningful evaluation and trial. If the Ceutan government were to regulate its shadow economy, it would have to be aware that trust can be enacted in multiple ways, and that its techniques of legal emancipation might ultimately constitute modes of cultural domination.

Notes

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1. This, Glick-Schiller (2008) argues, in turn, proceeds from an assumption that Western nations are culturally homogenous and that diversity is a postcolonial phenomenon and obviously ethnicity-based.
2. Despite its sprawling fortifications, the Moroccan–Ceutan border is fairly porous to all sorts of travelers. The real challenge comes with crossing the Straits of Gibraltar and reaching the European mainland. Though part of EU territory, Ceuta is not a Schengen Area member, making such travel difficult, and the enclave is a trap for illegal migrants who think they have reached Europe.
3. For a comprehensive analysis of the anthropological link between friendship and patronage, see Wolf 2001.

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